

## The Impact of Using Local Language Equivalence in the Classroom on the Students' Attitude toward English: A Teacher's Reflection

Yuyun Sri Kartikaningsih

**Abstract.** Meninggalkan metode 'grammar translation' bukan berarti menghindari terjemah dalam pembelajaran di kelas. Kenyataan bahwa penggunaan bahasa lokal dalam pergaulan sehari-hari (Madura dan Jawa) di lingkungan sekolah mempengaruhi keberhasilan pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris, terjemah langsung berdasarkan equivalensi menjadi sangat penting. Oleh karena itu, aspek lexico-cultural perlu dipertimbangkan dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini akan merefleksikan penggunaan equivalensi bahasa Inggris dengan bahasa lokal seperti penggunaan frase dan bentuk-bentuk 'chunks' serta dampak dari penggunaan equivalensi Bahasa Inggris dengan bahasa lokal terhadap sikap siswa terhadap Bahasa Inggris. 120 siswa kelas VII berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa beberapa unit leksikal digunakan untuk menjembatani kesenjangan 'lexico-cultural'. Dalam penelitian ini juga ditemukan bahwa rasa percaya diri siswa meningkat sehingga mendorong siswa untuk menggunakan Bahasa Inggris di luar kelas melalui 'code-mixing' dengan nyaman.

**Key Words:** Lexico-Cultural, Equivalence, translation, attitude

### Introduction

The negligence of grammar translation method does not mean that teacher should avoid translation in the classroom. The fact that daily used of local language (Madurese and Javanese) in the school environment influential to the success of EFL learning, direct equivalence-based translation is pivotal. Thus, lexico-cultural consideration should be taken into account as learning. This need may not be debateable as English for secondary students in Indonesia emphasis on the use of the language in lexical level, neglecting the importance of understanding the culture in context. Thus though "Language learners need to develop not only their linguistic competence but also their intercultural communicative competence to overcome both linguistic and cultural barriers they may encounter in interaction with people from other cultures" (Ho, 2009), lexical level in term of when and how a certain expressions may be used should be taken into account.

Ho (2009) explained that "Intercultural language learning is a stance on language teaching and learning that emphasizes the interdependence of language and culture and the importance of intercultural understanding as a goal of language

education. It is increasingly being promoted as a way to develop learners' ability to negotiate meanings across languages and cultures and prepare them for living in a multicultural world."

The importance of developing intercultural communicative competence alongside linguistic competence has resulted from learners' needs for acquiring intercultural skills for cross-cultural communication in which they may encounter linguistic and cultural barriers. Teaching from an intercultural perspective involves developing in learners critical cultural awareness of their own culturally-shaped world view and behaviours as well as the skills and attitudes to understand and successfully interact with people from other cultures, that is, to become inter-culturally as well as linguistically competent. EFL teachers therefore need to shift from a traditional stance to an intercultural one to develop both linguistic and intercultural competences of learners.

As learning a language requires cultural understanding, in lexical level the translation of a certain feature of the language cannot be neglected. However, "languages are not isomorphic and so translation cannot be expected to operate on a one-to-one basis across languages. This means that what goes in (the source language text) cannot be completely matched by what comes out (the target language text). Indeed, a mechanistic notion of input and output is itself misleading. Moreover, translation is not solely concerned with translating 'meaning'. As mentioned, some translations are aimed at conveying sound effects or emotional effects, while others focus on conveying factual information or (distinct from this) communicative intention. (Harkness and Schocua-glusberg, 1998)

This paper will investigate the impact of cultural equivalence of English on the students' attitude toward English in the classroom, one dealing with the use of local culture lexical equivalences. The cultural lexical strategy then will be described in terms of the students' responses.

## **Literature Review**

Van Dijk (2009:156) explained that "The similarities and differences in the way people in different societies understand communicative situations and the way these are consequential for text and talk have just been described as cultural." This clearly stated the strategic position of culture in communication. In another word, Language and

culture have an inextricable and interdependent relationship. Mitchell and Myles (2004) argue that “language and culture are not separate, but are acquired together, with each providing support for the development of the other” (p. 235). This relationship can be reflected in terms such as *linguaculture* (Friedrich, 1989), *languaculture* (Risager, 2005) *language-and-culture* (Liddicoat et al., 2003) or *culture language* (Papademetre & Scarino, 2006). It is also shown in cultural denotations and connotations in semantics (Byram, 1989), cultural norms in communication (Kramsch, 1993) and the mediatory role of language in the social construction of culture (Kramsch, 1996). Liddicoat et al. (2003) also claim that language and culture interact with each other in a way that culture connects to all levels of language use and structures; i.e. there is no level of language which is independent of culture (Figure 1). Moreover, the fact that language expresses, embodies and symbolizes cultural reality clearly shows that language and culture are bounded together (Kramsch, 1998). The relationship between language and culture is made meaningful in language learning as “the person who learns language without learning culture risks becoming a fluent fool” (Bennett, Bennett & Allen, 2003, p. 237).

### **Intercultural communicative competence**

Successful language teaching is dependent on clear understanding of the language nature, that is the integration of verbal utterance and culture. Thus, language education should be regarded as a wholeness of cultural communication. The concept of “intercultural communicative competence” (Byram, 1997) has refocused the goal of language education with culture integrated into language study. The use of the term “intercultural” reflects the view that EFL learners have to gain insight into both their own and the foreign culture (Kramsch, 1993). Intercultural communicative competence refers to the “ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities, and [the] ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality” (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002, p. 10). This competency emphasizes the mediation between different cultures, the ability to look at oneself from an ‘external’ perspective, analyze and adapt one’s own behaviours, values and beliefs (Byram & Zarate, 1997). An inter-culturally competent learner therefore displays a range of affective, behavioural and cognitive capacities (Byram, 2006, pp. 22–26):

- Attitudes/Affective capacities

- Acknowledgement of the identities of others
- Respect for otherness
- Tolerance for ambiguity
- Empathy
- Behaviour
- Flexibility
- Communicative awareness
- Cognitive capacities
- Knowledge
- Knowledge discovery
- Interpreting and relating
- Critical cultural awareness

## **Intercultural language learning**

### **Definition of culture learning**

Intercultural language learning has become an important focus of language education. It has resulted from “an acknowledgement and understanding of the links between language and culture as well as an understanding of how communication works across cultures” (Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000, p. 1). Language, culture and learning are fundamentally interrelated into a single educative approach (Liddicoat et al., 2003). From this concept, culture learning is defined as “the process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture-general knowledge, skills, attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures.

### **Verbal Language and Culture as practice**

Language reflects the culture of the users. It is a dynamic, developmental, and ongoing process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviourally, and affectively.” (Paige, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein, & Colby, 2003, p. 177). Thus, understanding a language should include understanding a culture. Simplification of language learning through cultural equivalence translation can be the most effective and easiest way to transform language use understanding. For example, English native speakers say “see you tomorrow” in parting discourse which is equivalent with “sampai jumpa” in Bahasa Indonesia or ‘ketemu maneh kisu’” in Java language.

Culture can be seen as sets of practices or the lived experience of individuals (Geertz, 1983). Crozet and Liddicoat (2000) and Liddicoat (2002) propose a core set of principles for learners' language and culture acquisition which involve acquisition about cultures comparing cultures exploring cultures, finding one's own 'third place' between cultures and exploring self. It means that culture should be integrated into language learning.

## **Method**

Three classes of the first semester students grade VII in Jember (120 students) participated in this research. The Speaking unit is designed for the students for three meetings action. Data was collected through reflective-observation during the process of teaching and learning and group interview with the students. Through reflection, the students' behaviour and the use of local language to transform the cultural function of certain expressions was recorded. Besides, the teacher field-noted the situation when the cultural-equivalent-based translation should take place. Then, the students were interviewed around their responses to the strategy. Finally, students' attitude outside the class was recorded through taped natural or out-door observation.

## **Findings**

Number of expressions including phrases and chunks were used by the teacher and directly translated into the local language using informal equivalence. There were three languages used by the teachers when addressing the suitable equivalent from English. Madurese and Javanese were used more frequent than Bahasa Indonesia. Indonesian equivalent was only used when there was not suitable equivalent in both local languages (Madurese and Javanese). Cultural-equivalent-based translation took place at the beginning of the semester to equip the students with classroom language in order to familiarize the students with the expressions thereby students can use them in the classroom.

Out-door observation informed that the students attempted to mix between English and their local language. An interesting finding was that the students' local language often interfered their English or reciprocally. For example, they added 'keh' in some expressions such as in "where are you going, keh?". The same creation found when they speak their local language can be seen in the following expressions:

- (madurese student) Engko' tak ngebeh buku, *how then?* (I don't bring book)

- (javanese student) *I don't know* poko'e.

The use of local language such as Madurese and Javanese in the classroom was dependent on the students' need. The most frequent phrases used during the class interaction can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. The most frequent classroom expressions

English	Madurese	javanese
How then	De'remmah	Yo'opo
I don't know	Enko' tak tao	Aku ora iso
What is ... in English?	Apa Bahasa Inggrissah ...?	Opo inggrisse ....?
Understood?	La ngerteh?	Wis ngerti
Don't be noisy	Je' rammi	Ojo rame
Can I wash my hand?	Ijin Entarra ka W.C	Ijin Kate dhe' W.C
Where are you going?	Entarrah dhe'emma?	Kate neng endi?
Sit down	Tojuk	Lungguh
What is the meaning of ....	Apa artenna ....?	Opo artine ...?

Interview with the students informed that understanding lexis through the equivalence of their local language give clearer understanding of the language use thereby raise their confidence. This also encourages them to use the language outside the class through code-mixing in a convenient way.

## Conclusion and Suggestion

Understanding cultural gap between L1 and L2 affect the success of language teaching and learning. Living in today's multicultural world, language learners need to develop not only their linguistic competence but also their intercultural communicative competence to overcome both linguistic and cultural barriers they may encounter in interaction with people from other cultures. The developed cultural components engage learners in cognitive, behavioural and affective aspects of culture learning through a variety of interactive tasks and activities in which they develop their cultural knowledge, skills and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with people. The proposed cultural components are expected to provide much benefit to learners as they can help them become both linguistically and inter-culturally competent learners.

In fact, the result of this study has not informed large language data of local language as the corpus was obtained from a very small scale. First, further study on the learners' local language corpus may be sufficient and beneficial for better material development. Second, observation on the use of code-mixing of target language and local language in the classroom practice may need more attention, mainly in a large scale study.

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